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A
L E T T E R
TO THE
A U T H O R
OF THE
MONTHLY REVIEW,

ON *K*
His Account of Dr. WATTS's Posthumous
Works for *December*, 1779;

AND
His Strictures upon Dr. GIBBONS's Memoirs
of Dr. WATTS, *October*, 1780.

*All seems infected that th' infected spy;
As all looks yellow to the jaundic'd eye.*

POPE.

L O N D O N :
Printed for W. NICOLL, No. 51, in St. Paul's
Church-Yard. 1781.

[Price Sixpence.]

A
B E T T E R

TO THE

A U T H O R

OF THE

MONTHLY REVIEW

ON

His Account of the Progress of the

Work of the



His Sentiments upon the

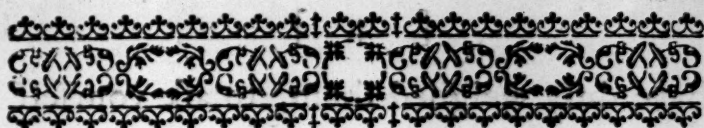
of Dr. Watts, 1780.

All persons who wish to see the
originals of the above, or
to see the original of the
above, may do so on application
to the Librarian of the
British Museum.

L O N D O N :

Printed by W. Nicol, N. 22, in St. Paul's
Church-yard, 1781.

[Price Sixpence]



A

LETTER

TO THE

AUTHOR of the MONTHLY REVIEW.

SIR,

THE fourth Article in your
T Review for *December* 1779 is
entitled, "The Posthumous
" Works of the late Reverend and
" learned *Isaac Watts*, D. D. compiled
" from Papers in Possession of his im-
" mediate Successors, published by a
" Gentleman of the University of *Cam-*
" *bridge*, in two Volumes."

In your Account, Sir, of this Pub-
lication I will take the Liberty to say
there are several Things which I would
wish you to re-consider; and, when you

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have

have duly weighed them, to ask yourself whether there is a just Foundation for them, and, if there is not, to retract, and, as far as you can, cancel them.

You tell us that “ the *Doctor* was an
 “ ingenious Writer, that he had a lively
 “ and fertile Imagination, and that some
 “ of his Poems have been deservedly
 “ admired, but that he wanted a correct
 “ Judgment to restrain that *Hey-dey* of
 “ the Spirit, which too frequently led
 “ him astray into the Wilds of Fanati-
 “ cism to play at *Bo-peep* with the
 “ Saints. Here it was (say you) that
 “ he most exposed the Weakness of his
 “ Understanding.”—Is there any Thing
 that we can gather from all this but that
 you are endeavouring to hold up the
Doctor to Contempt and Ridicule, and a
 Number of Persons, who they are you
 have not distinctly told us, whom you
 are pleased to call *the Saints*, in the same
 Vein of Dishonour and Burlesque. The
Hey-dey of the Spirit, and the playing at
Bo-peep,

Bo-peep, are very low Kinds of Metaphors, and, in my Opinion, not very ornamental to your critical Page; and besides this, your Readers may be at a Loss to understand what is intended by you, or on what Reason you ground the Representation of the *Doctor as playing at Bo-peep with the Saints*, as he was, beyond all Question, a grave and serious Writer, and a most upright, worthy, and venerable Man.

You presently tell us, “ that the
 “ natural Enthusiasm of the *Doctor's*
 “ Mind was improved on a fanatical
 “ Education.” The *Doctor's* Father,
 who educated him at least for several
 Years, was a man of most eminent
 Piety, and exemplary, immaculate, and
 persevering Virtue to an uncommon
 Age of Life, and why an Education
 under him should be thought *fanatical*
 I know not, except that his Father was
 of the *Calvinistic* Sentiments. But why
 a *Calvinist* and a *Fanatic* should be con-
 vertible

vertible Terms is left for you to explain and prove. Were not the Instruments of the glorious Reformation of these Kingdoms from Popery, and were not the Ministers of God in the last Age, Conformists and Non-conformists, who shewed so much Zeal for Religion in their Preaching and Writings, and whose Lives were so remarkably fruitful in all Holiness, Men professedly in the *Calvinistic* Sentiments, and what must they on that Account be branded with *Fanaticism*? Would to God, if they were *Fanatics*, that Ministers of a like Spirit might arise to reform, edify, and bless the World!

“ Hence you say, (that is, from the
 “ natural Enthusiasm of the *Doctor's*
 “ Temper improved on a fanatical Edu-
 “ cation) without Design he ran into
 “ certain devotional Absurdities; but it
 “ needed (your next Sentence) the Ge-
 “ nius of *Milton* to adopt the Cant of
 “ *Calvinism*, and yet maintain the Dig-
 “ nity

“ nity of Poetry ; a great Gulf lies between.” O unhappy *Calvinism*, so baneful, so destructive to the Beauties of Poetry, that only the superlative Powers of a *Milton* can secure the last from the Blast and Perdition of the first! But what Shadow of Truth is there for this Assertion? Surely not the Subject, not the Sentiments, be they true or false, constitute the Merit of the Poet, but the Manner in which he treats them! Shall *Homer* be degraded from his Poetical Elevation, because of his scolding or wounded Deities, and the other Trash that may be found in his Writings? Or is *Lucretius* to be denied the Laurels of *Parnassus* because he wrote in Support of the *Epicurean* Hypothesis of the Formation of the World, an Hypothesis to the last Degree irrational and absurd?

In the Progress of your Account of the *Doctor's* Posthumous Works, you consider the Poems in the first Volume as his own Compositions, and say that
“ the

“ the greatest Part of them are below
 “ Criticism, &c.” Now, Sir, though
 you might, at the Time you published
 these Strictures, be a Stranger to the
 Fact, yet has not *Dr. Gibbons*, in his
Memoirs of the Doctor since printed, most
 abundantly proved that most of the
 Poems in the Collection were not the
Doctor's, and would it not have become
 you, or would you in the least Degree
 have hazarded your Character for Im-
 partiality and Honour, if you had,
 when you made your Remarks on *Dr.*
Gibbons's Piece, frankly acknowledged
 that the Collection, as to the major Part
 of it, was not the *Doctor's*, and conse-
 quently, that your Depreciation of him
 as the Author had not the least Foun-
 dation in Truth? But all that you say
 upon the Matter is “ that the Editor
 “ (that is, *Dr. Gibbons*) disputes the
 “ Authenticity of a considerable Part of
 “ the above Publication.”

As

As to your Account of *Dr. Gibbons's Memoirs of Dr. Watts* in your *Monthly Review* for *October 1780* I shall take the Freedom to make some Remarks upon it.

You censure him for his Profusion of Metaphors. Is not a Profusion of Metaphors as pardonable as Metaphors so low as to be unworthy Publication, and so dark as to convey little or no Meaning? I mean the *Hey-dey of the Spirit*, and *playing at Bo-peep with the Saints*?

Dr. Gibbons's Mention of *Mr. Rowe's*, (*Dr. Watts's* Tutor's Name) you say, "gives him a precious Opportunity of saying something on the darling Subject of himself." But what does he say, "but that he is now Pastor of the Church which was formerly *Mr. Rowe's*, and that he thinks it an Honour that a Predecessor of his was Tutor to so great and good a Man as

C

" *Dr.*

“ *Dr. Watts*, and that the Church under
 “ his Care has been so eminently distin-
 “ guished as to have him for a Member.”

Pray what just Occasion for Offence, or
 what Food for critical Severity in all
 this? Or where the Tincture of Self-
 Importance and Vanity? Was it at all
 improper to insert in the Memoirs of a
 Person's Life to what Church he ad-
 joined himself? Or does *Dr. Gibbons*
 assume any Merit to himself for a Trans-
 action in which he had not, and could
 not have, any personal Concern*?

You

* It would be no Dishonour to the Author of the
Monthly Review if he would keep a little more
 strictly to Truth than what he has done in the
 Account of *Dr. Gibbons* concerning *Dr. Watts's*
 being a Member of the Church of which he is now
 Pastor. *Dr. Gibbons* says, “ that *Mr. Thomas Rowe*
 “ was the Son of the *Rev. John Rowe, M. A.* who
 “ was ejected by the Act of Uniformity, 1662,
 “ from *Westminster-Abbey*, and that the Father,
 “ and afterwards the Son, were Pastors of the
 “ Church of *Protestant Dissenters* now meeting at
 “ *Haberdashers Hall, London*, of which the Editor
 “ of

You charge *Dr. Gibbons* with laying on Colour upon Colour “ with a matchless “ Prodigality.” You also tell the Public “ of his passing a most extravagant “ Encomium on *Dr. Watts’s* Talent for “ Conversation*.” Be it remembered, that

“ of these Memoirs has been Pastor 36 Years;” and he then adds, “ that he thinks it an Honour “ that a Predecessor of his was Tutor and Pastor to “ so great and good a Man as *Dr. Watts*, and that “ the Church under his Care has been so eminently “ distinguished as to have him for a Member.” This is what *Dr. Gibbons* says, and all that he says upon the Matter; but the *Monthly Reviewer*, for what Ends he best knows, says, “ that *Dr. Gibbons* “ exults in the Honour he enjoys of having been “ for the Space of thirty-six Years the Pastor of a “ Dissenting Congregation meeting at *Haberdashers* “ *Hall*, the very same Meeting-House (where does “ *Dr. Gibbons* say this?) in which this very *Mr.* “ *Rowe* formerly preached (this is another Invention “ of the *Reviewer*), and where *Dr. Watts* himself “ was first admitted to Communion.” This is also a mere Figment, and what *Dr. Gibbons* never asserted.

* The Encomium on the *Doctor’s* Conversation is given in these Words: “ Indeed, no Person with

that *Dr. Gibbons* had the Honour of an intimate Acquaintance with the *Doctor*, and why might he not be allowed without Censure to describe him to the Height of the Ideas he entertained concerning him? Or admit that *Dr. Gibbons* has gone too high in his Praise of *Dr. Watts*, is not this Excess as excusable as your Degradations of him, when you call him
 “ the Idol of a particular Class among
 “ the Dissenters—when you say it is
 “ generally agreed by Men of Taste and
 “ Science that *Dr. Watts* hath no Claim
 “ to Superiority either as a Poet, Philo-
 “ sopher, or Divine—that he wanted
 “ a correct Judgment, and that he could
 “ not maintain the Dignity of Poetry?”

“ One Observation say you, which
 “ the Editor of these Memoirs hath
 “ whom I was ever acquainted spoke with more
 “ Ease, Readiness, and Elegance, than he (*Dr.*
 “ *Watts* did), and as his Discourse flowed like a
 “ clear full Stream from an inexhaustible Fountain,
 “ so it was very instructive and entertaining.”

“ produced

“ produced from the Register of his
 “ Memory, will, we are persuaded,
 “ reflect no Honour on *Dr. Watts’s*
 “ Taste or Understanding in the Judge-
 “ ment of Men of Sense.” It is this,
 “ I had rather (said *Dr. Watts*) be the
 “ Author of *Mr. Baxter’s Call to the*
 “ *Unconverted*, than the Author of *Mil-*
 “ *ton’s Paradise Lost*.” “ Some will
 “ think (add you) that this was spoken,
 “ if spoken at all, rather from Envy
 “ than Conviction.” In the Sense in
 which *Dr. Watts* spoke it, which was
 undoubtedly from the Consideration of
Mr. Baxter’s Piece having done more
 Good to the Interests of immortal Souls,
 by savingly converting them to God and
 Holiness, and so in the End bringing
 them to eternal Felicity, than what
Milton’s Paradise Lost had done, or was
 ever likely to effect, the Speech was
 most worthy of a truly good Minister,
 a Man of God, who from his Heart
 preferred the Salvation of Souls with no
 high

high Degrees of Honour from Men to the sublimest Reputation, where that incomparable, highest Benefit was not obtained,

In your Zeal, as it should seem, to run down *Dr. Gibbons's* Character as a Writer, you not only very liberally pass your Censures upon his Memoirs of *Dr. Watts*, which was your professed Object of Attention, but you look back to his former Publications, two of which you endeavour to hold up to Contempt. “ Why (says you) did *Dr. Gibbons* write “ his *Juvenilia*, and permit the Reproach “ of his Youth still to stand foremost in “ the Front of his poetic Follies?” Have you indeed forgotten, if you have, be not displeased to be reminded by me, what you said at the Conclusion of your Account of these very same *Juvenilia*, in your *Review* for *September 1750*. Your Words are, “ As a Proof that this Wri- “ ter’s Genius is capable of ascending to “ other

“ other Heights, not unequal to those of
 “ Friendship, we shall next give a Trans-
 “ cript of his Poem entitled, *The Triumph*
 “ *of Religion.*” How will your former
 Praise, and your present Censure accord
 together ?

You next ask, “ Why did *Dr. Gib-*
 “ *bons* write three Epistles to *Philander*
 “ on the Duty of a Minister, and call that
 “ Poetry which is barely Prose ?” If you
 will turn to the Account given by the
 Editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* of
 this Performance, in *May, 1772* *, you
 will find, among other Commendations,
 the following Passages. “ These Epistles

* The Account of this Performance in the
Gentleman's Magazine has the Letter X annexed to
 it. If this Signature was that of the late *Dr.*
Hawkefworth, by which he distinguished the Parts
 he took in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, it is humbly
 asked of the *Monthly Reviewer*, be he who he may,
 whether *Dr. Hawkefworth's* Judgement and Senti-
 ments of a Composition may not deservedly be con-
 sidered of equal Weight with his own ?

“ contain

“ contain many judicious and important
 “ Precepts, and glow at once with a
 “ Benevolence and Piety that must re-
 “ commend the Author to every Mind
 “ that is not insensible to the Endear-
 “ ments of Friendship, and Importance
 “ of Religion. The Subjects perhaps
 “ are not the best adapted to Poetry;
 “ yet in many Parts they have been made
 “ susceptible of its Beauties.” Passages
 are then produced from each Epistle,
 the last of which is as follows :

————— To the Couch
 Of Anguish and Disease, where Death his Dart
 Shakes, but suspends the Stroke, whenever call'd
 Be sure to speed your Way. These solemn Scenes,
 That soon, how soon, my Friend, will be our own,
 May many a profitable Truth disclose,
 Unnotic'd in Life's gay meridian Blaze,
 And stamp them on the Heart. Oft too the Mind,
 While its frail Tabernacle totters round,
 Like pliant Wax, is ready to receive
 Impressions in the Hour of Health disdain'd :
 And O ! how kind, when the Soul quivering stands
 Upon the Threshold of Eternity,
 To point it to its Refuge, and its Home,

And

And prune its Pinions for its awful Flight
 Into the Worlds unseen, and yield in Pray'r
 The Spirit to its Father and its God.

But these Epistles, Sir, in your View,
 in whatever different Light they have
 been beheld by others, “deserve not
 “the Name of Poetry, but are barely
 “Prose.”

Your next Question is, “Why did
 “*Dr. Gibbons*, stung with the Lust of
 “Metaphor, compare this *Philander's*
 “Head (the Person to whom he ad-
 “dressed the above-mentioned Epistle)
 “to an Hive, and the Thoughts of that
 “Head, when laid on its Pillow, after
 “an hard Day's Study, to a Swarm of
 “Bees humming around it?” Any
 Metaphors may be turned into Burlesque
 by a false Representation, and Additions
 made to them by the unkind Critic,
 and it is but Justice, if they are pro-
 duced in Ridicule of the Author, that
 they should be recited in his own Words.

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Had

Had you, Sir, done this, and given the *Doctor's* Metaphor in his own Language, and not yours, you had omitted *Philander's Head, the Hive, the Swarm, and the Humming*, which are your own Additaments, and the Public might have found nothing faulty, or worthy of Ridicule, if they had received the Passage from your Review in *Dr. Gibbons's* own Words, which are, “ to pass from a
 “ deep Engagement of the Mind in deep
 “ Study immediately to our Beds, will
 “ be followed with Wakefulness, when
 “ we could wish for Sleep, or with such
 “ a Kind of Slumbers as will be little
 “ better as to Refreshment than a continued Watching, for we are lying
 “ down amidst a Crowd of Thoughts
 “ that, like Bees, will haunt and disturb
 “ our Pillows, without yielding us any
 “ Recompence for the Annoyance they
 “ give us.”

After, Sir, you have told us that the twelfth Chapter in *Dr. Gibbons's Memoirs* consists

consists of select Letters of *Dr. Watt's* Correspondents, you are pleased to add, "that many of them are egregiously trifling and ridiculous." Thus, by one Dash of your magisterial Pen, without a single Instance in Proof, these many Letters are to be considered as beneath any Attention and Regard. Thus it pleases the supreme, sovereign Arbiter, as you may, though too fondly, fancy yourself, of literary Life or Death. One Word more with you, Sir, on this Matter. Among these *many egregiously trifling and ridiculous Letters*, do you include the four Letters from Archbishop *Secker*? The Letter from Archbishop *Hort*? The seven Letters from Bishop *Gibson*? The twenty-one Letters from the Countess of *Hertford*, afterwards the Duchess of *Somerset* *? The three Letters from

* The Character which the late *Mr. Shenstone*, who unquestionably was a good Judge of Writing, gives of her *Grace's* Letters contained in *Mr. Hull's* two Volumes of select Letters, is, "That there

from the deceased *Lord Barrington*? The Letter from the present *Lord Barrington*? The four Letters from *Governor Belcher*? The Letter from *Sir Gilbert Elliot*? The Letter from the *Lady Levett*? The three Letters from the *Rev. Mr. Ziegenbagen*? The Letter from the *Rev. Mr. Standen*? The Letter from the *Rev. Mr. Hervey*? The Letter from *Mr. Baylston*? The two Letters from *Mr. Theophilus Rowe*? And the Letter from *Mr. Robert Porter*? Surely these Letters (no less than 52 out of 57, which is the whole Number) deserve something better to be said of them than “ that they are egregiously

“ are discernible in them a perfect Rectitude of
 “ Heart, Delicacy of Sentiment, and a truly classic
 “ Ease and Elegance of Stile.” See the Preface to the Collection.—What Reason can there be why the like Praise should not be due to her Letters to *Dr. Watts*? Good Sense, a Love to Religion and Virtue, and the most amiable and condescending Benevolence, is the just Description of them, and I am persuaded will strike every intelligent, candid, and pious Reader.

“ trifling

“ trifling and ridiculous ?” For my own Part I know not one out of the 57 that merits such a Reprobation, but esteem them all, though in different Ways *, worthy of the public Eye; and why may I not have my Opinion, Sir, and as freely communicate it as you have done yours?

Before I close my Letter, will you allow me to inquire why you have treated *Dr. Watts's Posthumous Works*, and next *Dr. Gibbons's Memoirs* of him, with such remarkable Severity? Was it indeed because they were considered by you as

* If some of the Letters are not elegantly written, yet there is a Vein of good Sense that runs through them all, and if every one of them might not deserve Publication as a fine Composition, yet some valuable End, such as a manifest Concern for Religion, Proofs of the Esteem in which *Dr. Watts* was held by Persons of different Denominations, and the Applications to him in Matters of Christian Benevolence might justify the Editor of his Life in the Communication of the Letters to the World,

having

having adopted, as you express yourself, the *Cant of Calvinism*, and the Hope you entertained that, by making them Examples of literary Punishment for such an enormous, unpardonable Crime, you might deter all others from vindicating, or so much as professing, any of the *Calvinistic* Tenets? If so, where is your Moderation, where is your Candour, where is your Liberality of Mind? For perhaps you imagine yourself a large Possessor of them, and would take it as a very heinous Imputation upon you if it were only hinted that you are destitute of these Virtues, which, wherever they are found, are so truly praise-worthy, and ornamental to human Nature; but, where they are wanting, most deplorably sink and debase it.

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As you, Sir, have taken such Liberties with the Writings of others, there can be no Need of Apology for the Freedom of examining your Criticisms, and pointing

ing out to you and to the Public what appears justly exceptionable in them, especially when by these Means Censures are wiped off from Characters that you may have causelessly and wantonly aspersed.—I subscribe myself, and I hope with a just Claim to the Title,

A LOVER OF TRUTH AND CANDOUR.

F I N I S.

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